



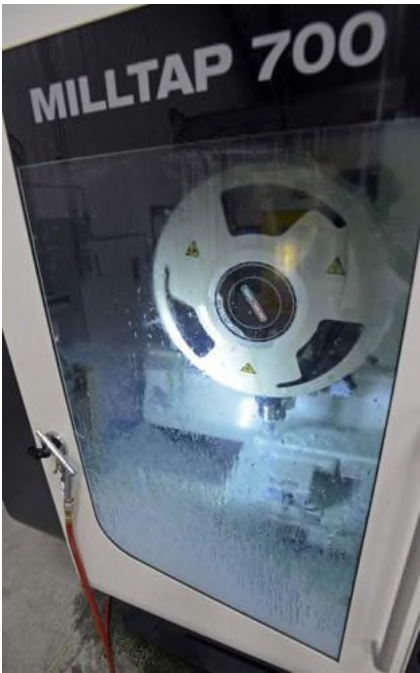
# Baton Rouge’s Mezzo Technologies looking beyond race tracks to space

BR-based Mezzo Technologies looking beyond race car tracks to space after getting NASA contract



BY BILL LODGE [blodge@theadvocate.com](mailto:blodge@theadvocate.com) Mar 7, 2015 Updated Jul 29, 2019 2 min to read

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Advocate staff photo by BILL FEIG — A machine sculpts a radiator component out of a block of aluminum Tuesday at Mezzo Technologies. NASA officials toured the Baton Rouge firm’s facilities and equipment.

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The 15-year-old company, which has produced advanced radiators and oil coolers for professional race car teams since 2007, now has an opportunity to work for NASA by developing its microtube heat exchanger for use on the space agency's planned Orion spacecraft.

"NASA has a vehicle called Orion that will circle the moon," Kevin Kelly, Mezzo's president, said Tuesday.

The Orion module, which will be home to astronauts traveling in outer space, is being built by Lockheed Martin at the Michoud facility in New Orleans, where Boeing crews also are working on the Space Launch System, a 70-ton heavy-lift rocket that will propel Orion into space.

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Mezzo's \$200,000 Orion research-and-development contract calls for a water-cooled heat exchanger capable of surviving tremendously hot temperatures on the moon's sunny side and fiercely freezing temperatures on its dark side.

"Our ultimate goal is Mars," said Ryan Stephan, NASA's director of game-changing development. Both men spoke during a meeting at Mezzo's 20,000-square-foot facility at 10246 Mammoth Ave.

NASA officials also said United Technologies Aerospace Systems is working on a wax-cooled heat exchanger that could be used on Orion.

Kelly said he is confident, though, that Mezzo Technologies will produce a water-cooled heat exchanger that can survive countless freezes and thaws over many years.

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“The most important part of our product is tubes that don’t leak,” Kelly added. “We make the vast majority of the parts right here.”

Joe Poynot, a design engineer for Mezzo, added that interior channels in those tiny tubes must be drilled expertly in order to avoid leaks. Poynot said Mezzo’s equipment fills that need.

“Our highest expertise is in drilling holes,” Poynot added.

Kelly said the tubes in which many of those channels are drilled range in size from 0.05 millimeter to 0.1 millimeter.

Noting that miles of such tubes are contained in a Mezzo radiator for a race car, Kelly said no one should forget: “Little tubes mean lots of surface area.”

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For years, Kelly said after the meeting, Mezzo Technologies has been predominantly a research company. Much of its income came in the form of Small Business Innovative Research grants from the Army and Navy.

Race car radiators have helped the Baton Rouge company grow the commercial side of its business since 2010, when more than half of the 33 cars at the Indianapolis 500 installed them.

Kelly declined to specify the firm's annual sales, but noted that Mezzo had 12 employees three years ago. Today, he said, there are 45 full-time employees.

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"Our payroll has about tripled in the past year," Kelly said. "I think we're on a real positive trajectory."

The commercial side of Mezzo's business now exceeds its research-and-design side, he said. "By the end of this year, I believe our commercial business will be 85 percent of our total."

Kelly added: "We sell to Formula 1, to IndyCar."

Today, Kelly said, Mezzo sells between 60 and 70 expensive radiators to race car teams competing in the Verizon IndyCar Series.

On the Formula 1 circuit, Kelly said, one team buys between 20 and 30 radiators a year.

The cheapest of those radiators sells for a little over \$5,000.

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Kelly wouldn't specify the top end of the prices for race car radiators. But he did confirm that a person buying a new pickup truck today would have to pay more than the price of the truck if he or she wanted to trade the manufacturer's radiator for Mezzo's highest-priced heat exchanger.



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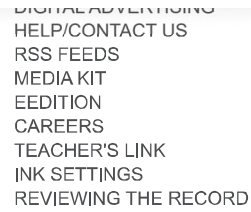
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